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Written on NOVEMBER 20, 2012 AT 7:45 AM by VKREMER

Naval Hospital Oak Harbor Excels in DUI Prevention

Filed under: COMMUNITY SUPPORT CORPSMAN FORCE HEALTH AND SAFETY (NO COMMENTS)

By Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Richard Gold, Drug and Alcohol Program Advisor at Naval Hospital Oak Harbor



Hospital Corpsman 1st Class Richard Gold (left) and Command Master Chief Andy Shelton, Naval Hospital Oak Harbor, with Sharon McIntyre

In the past 17 months, Naval Hospital Oak Harbor has embraced a culture of accountability and responsibility when it comes to drug and alcohol incidents.

Similar to many other Navy commands, Naval Air Station Whidbey Island works proactively

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to decrease the incidents of Driving under the Influence (DUI) and underage drinking. In May of 2011, then Commanding Officer, Capt. Susan E. Lichtenstein, offered an incentive to the military staff: for every 90 days of being alcohol and drug incident free, military members will receive a 24 hour liberty. Naval Hospital Oak Harbor has met this requirement three times since September 2011. NHOH is currently on day 82 of the fourth 90 day reporting period that began on August 27th, and boasts 172 consecutive days and counting without an incident.

An important part of this success is the provision of training, command-wide commitment, and accountability at every level.

First, ALCOHOL-AWARE training begins when a new member checks into the command. NHOH is at 100% for this Alcohol Awareness Basic training. On the fourth day of indoctrination, all military members must attend a full day of [Drug and Alcohol Program Advisor \(DAPA\)](#) training. [Alcohol and Drug Abuse Management Seminar \(ADAMS\)](#) is mandatory for all E5 and above, and highly recommended for the civilian equivalent.

Second, to increase the participation in ADAMS, NHOH sent me to specialized training in San Diego to become a certified instructor. This has enabled NHOH to conduct the required training locally and will greatly save in travel costs in the upcoming year. To date, ten classes have been completed. An additional class is scheduled for December 10th to complete calendar year 2012.

Next, [Safety Stand-downs](#) are conducted prior to every holiday period to reinforce the importance of being safe and responsible.

The [Medical Inspector General](#) checklist also focuses on professional development of the leadership. I was instrumental in coordinating with the Navy Center of Professional Development in San Diego to bring ADAMS for Leaders training to the Pacific Northwest. Not only did the NHOH Commanding Officer and Executive Officer get this mandatory training completed, Naval Hospital Bremerton, Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, and Whidbey Island tenant commands took advantage of the local opportunity and saved tens of thousands of taxpayer dollars to instruct our Pacific Northwest command leaders.

In the Fall of 2011, I organized an Impaired Driving Impact Panel (IDIPIC) of Island County demonstration. This community program provides personal stories from those affected by driving under the influence (DUI). The Island County Sheriff, the Coroner, and parents of teenagers added their heart wrenching tragedies about the senseless loss of life that occurs when people choose not to drink responsibly. Powerful, very graphic presentations were shown, and specially designed equipment was used to demonstrate the effects drugs and alcohol (even in small amounts) have on the human body. It was a wake-up call for many of those who did not think drinking a couple of beers would have an effect on their ability to react quickly and avoid an accident.

We also provide all NHOH Sailors with "[Right Spirit Ride](#)" cards, which provide Sailors with free rides home from local taxi companies if they find themselves in situations where they cannot get home safely. Sailors also know that they can call the quarterdeck and receive a safe ride home without fear of disciplinary action.

NHOH has not experienced a DUI since January of 2011. NHOH's successful program has met and exceeded the requirements to display the Right Spirit Pennant which requires a minimum of 15 months of being DUI free.

There is still room for improvement, and NHOH will continue to ensure our personnel meet all training requirements, remain vigilant, and responsible.

For DAPA resources, click [here](#).

For more information on NHOH, click [here](#).

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